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ABSTRACT

It was hypothesized that a reliable and valid measure of the psychological adjustment of clergymen could be obtained by constructing a sentence completion test. The items were designed to measure the following six areas: (1) self-perception, (2) interpersonal relations, (3) psychosexual maturity, (4) priesthood, (5) Church-faith, and (6) job satisfaction. A 72-item test was constructed and administered to 115 priests. The protocols were judged using an empirically based scoring manual. The results indicated that the r's for reliability ranged from .84 to .96, and the biserial r's ranged from .62 to .86 for validity, thereby supporting the hypotheses. (Author)

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THE LOYOLA SENTENCE COMPLETION BLANK FOR CLERGYMEN: CONSTRUCTION AND VALIDATION

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The Loyola Sentence Completion Blank for Clergymen: Construction and Validation

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Abstract

It was hypothesized that a reliable and valid measure of the adjustment of clergymen could be obtained by constructing a sentence completion test with items designed to measure (1) self-perception (2) interpersonal relations (3) psychosexual maturity (4) priesthood (5) Church-faith (6) job satisfaction. A 72-item test was constructed and administered to 115 priest Ss. Using an empirically-based scoring manual, judges scored the protocols. The hypotheses were supported - reliability: r = .84 to .96; validity: rbis = .62 to .86.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to construct a tool which would be useful for discriminating psychological adjustment in the clergyman population. The desire was to have an easy-to-administer tool which would point out by numerical scores those clergymen who have problems regarding overall psychological adjustment or problems in any of the following subareas of adjustment: (1) self-perception (2) interpersonal relations (3) psychosexual maturity (4) priesthood (5) Church-faith, and (6) job satisfaction. It was also desired that the tool be projective enough to facilitate its clinical use for understanding an individual clergyman's style, aspirations, strengths, etc. Thus, the tool chosen was a sentence completion blank.

At present, the sentence completion method is used extensively for research purposes, especially when empirically-devised scoring manuals such as the one Rotter and Rafferty developed in 1950 are used. Comments on the validity of the test also support its use: Murstein, for example, in his 1965 Handbook of projective techniques says, "The Sentence Completion Method is a valid test, generally speaking, and probably the most valid of all the projective techniques reported in the literature."

A further reason for choosing the sentence completion blank as the tool to be developed for use with the clergyman population is its attested use with similar populations, for example, seminarians. Much work has been done at Loyola during the past decade on the Loyola Seminarian Sentence Completion Test. A validation study of it is reported in the 1969 Journal of Projective Techniques and Personality Assessment by

Sheridan and Kobler. They found their sentence completion test to be a reliable and valid indicator of "need for counseling" among seminarians.

One further introductory question needs to be asked, namely, "Why bother devising and validating a special sentence completion blank for clergymen at all?" My reasons for doing so are twofold: one, the crisis of the clergyman's vocation, especially as this crisis is experienced today by Roman Catholic priests, made the priest population an important and interesting group for me to study, and secondly, devising such a test at the time I did made it possible for me to tie my research in with the national study of priests which was getting under way at that time. This national study of priests is presently being published under the authorship of Eugene Kennedy and Victor Heckler. It is entitled, The Loyola psychological study of the ministry and life of the American priest.

To get on then with the present research let me present the procedure used and the results obtained regarding the construction and validation of the Loyola Sentence Completion Blank for Clergymen.

Subjects

Priests enrolled in the Loyola Pastoral Institute during the summer of 1969 were asked to participate in a pilot study for the national study of priests. 115 priests volunteered. The mean age was 35 years. 39% of the priests belonged to religious communities; the remaining were diocesan priests. They were engaged in a variety of activities and came from various parts of the United States. Of the 107 American priests who took the sentence completion test, 60 were selected by use of a table of random numbers to be interviewed as part of the pilot study. Since these 60 subjects would be used in the validity study for the sentence completion

test, they were excluded from the choice of 40 subjects to be used for setting up the initial scoring manual. The 40 subjects used for setting up the scoring manual were chosen randomly from the remaining subjects.

Construction of the test

The six areas to be measured in the test (self-perception, interpersonal relations, etc.) were chosen in conjunction with those working on the national study of priests; these areas seemed especially relevant to the priest's psychological adjustment. At least 20 stems per category were compiled; these were then rated by 4 clinical psychologists for their usefulness in eliciting responses indicative of emotional adjustment. After the four psychologists had rated the stems and added new ones, they met together and debated their ratings until they reached consensus on the 14 most useful stems per category. These then were the stems used for the first form of the test.

After the test was administered and scored, the writer used the scorers' judgments to eliminate two more items per category. The criteria used in eliminating these stems were: difficulty in scoring the item, inability of the item to discriminate along the rating scale, and the tendency of an item to frequently produce a neutral response. It was this revised form of the test which was used for computing the reliability and validity figures given in this study.

Administration of the test

The test was administered to the entire group of volunteers at one session during which time they also completed a data sheet and the MMPI. Two proctors estimated that the average time for completing the sentence

completion test was 35 minutes.

Scoring system

An objective scoring system was desired, thus a manual of scoring examples was compiled. Four judges (different from those who evaluated the stems for usefulness), all clinical psychologists, one a priest, one a woman, and 2 laymen, were asked to rate each of the responses for 40 protocols along a 7 point rating scale, going from the most positive through neutral to most negative. The four judges' ratings were then compared. Those responses which were rated the same by at least three of the four judges were collected into the manual. The scoring for the reliability and validity studies was then done using this manual.

Reliability

The reliability measured was inter-scorer reliability. Two graduate students in psychology were asked to score 32 protocols, 16 at a time, according to the Scoring Rules and Scoring Examples. Neither graduate student knew who the other scorer was. Precautions were also taken to avoid the "halo effect" by having the scorers rate all items #1 before going on to item #2, etc., and by having them record their ratings for each item on separate cards. Pearson r was then computed for total scores as well as for the six subtest scores.

Validity

The validity tested here was a type of criterion-related validity, i.e., the question to be answered was whether the sentence completion scores (both the total and the six subtest scores) gave an indication

of adjustment consonant with other measures of adjustment. The criteria used were based on (1) MMPI profiles and (2) psychologists' ratings of the subjects. These latter were made on the basis of in-depth interviews with the subjects. The MMPI criterion used to differentiate the group into two subgroups--those evidencing good adjustment and those evidencing poor adjustment--was as follows: poor adjustment was defined as having two or more clinical scales both greater than or equal to a t-score of 70. Good adjustment was defined as having no clinical scale greater than a t-score of 65. The psychologists who interviewed the subjects rated them in several ways. The ratings used here were their rating of normal or abnormal plus their rating on the Westley and Epstein scale of adjustment. Adequate adjustment on the Westley and Epstein scale was defined as a A or B rating; inadequate adjustment was defined as a C or D rating.

Three sets of biserial correlations were then run. The first was between sentence completion scores and the distribution of Ss meeting the MMPI criteria for good or poor adjustment; the second was between sentence completion scores and the distribution of Ss meeting the psychologist rating criterion of good or poor adjustment; the third was between sentence completion scores and the distribution of subjects meeting both the MMPI criterion for good or poor adjustment and the psychologist rating criterion for good or poor adjustment. In all of these cases, the correlations were run for the total sentence completion scores and the subtest scores.

Results

The results indicate that the test is both reliable and valid. Pearson r correlations ranged from .96 on the total score to .84 on the

self-perception subtest. Validity as measured by biserial correlations was .62 when sentence completion total scores were correlated with the MMPI indication of adjustment; .66 when correlated with psychologists' ratings of adjustment; and .86 when correlated with the combined criteria of MMPI and psychologists' ratings. These correlations were significant at the .01 level. The subtest scores did not always correlate significantly with the separate criteria, but they did correlate significantly at least at the .05 level when the combined criteria was used. These correlations ranged from 178 on the job satisfaction scale to .54 on the priesthood scale.

In conclusion, the Loyola Sentence Completion Blank for Clergymen is a reliable measure and it does give a useful indication of adequate versus inadequate adjustment for clergymen. A cutoff score of 274 on the test correctly identifies 87% of the subjects on the basis of adequate versus inadequate adjustment. The subtest scores give some indication of how the clergyman is operating in a particular area, but they are not best used as independent indicators of adjustment.

Thus, the test can be used for several clinical purposes with the priest population. In the national study of priests mentioned earlier, the test was found to be one of the most discriminating indicators of psychological development among priests. Also, as a result of its being used in that study, further data on it is available and will be analyzed by way of item analysis and cluster analysis in order to further refine the test. Hopefully, the test will also be used with other populations of clergymen such as the American Bishops. But that is for a future time. Thank you.